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Ise and Japan Study Program 2018 – Report

The Ise and Japan Study Program is a perfect mixture of illuminating classes and various wonderful fieldtrips. Introducing the many different sides that Ise City has to offer is a daunting task indeed but in only three weeks we have been taught about both ancient Ise and recent Ise, traditional Ise and modern Ise, Ise for adventurers, Ise for travellers and Ise for researchers, to name a few. We learned about the history of the city – why it was built where it was built – but we also visit the more modern additions like the aquarium, we followed lessons about the pilgrimage to Ise in Edo period before visiting it ourselves the way people do now, visited Asamayama, the old ryokan and onshi mansion, and many different shrines and temples. In every one of these places we learned a little bit more about the city's history, Shinto and Japan itself.

One of the aspects of Japanese culture that has always fascinated me has been the traditional philosophical views and values that permeate Japan and defined Japanese history on many different levels. These values are the thoughts embedded deeply in tea ceremony, what it means to be bushido and the spirit of Shinto, to name a few. For the past 5 years I have been trying to understand these moral codes and principles that seem so similar and yet fundamentally different from their European counterparts, and to allow them to influence the way I live my own life.

However, I feel like I have never come as close to understanding them in all that time as I have in these three weeks. From the importance of 'heart' and 'feelings' (性) in the life of the warrior to the almost unbelievable acceptance that Shinto has of other religions and expressions of religion, from the feeling of valuing every encounter as though it might be your last in the true meaning of 一期一会 to the University's own motto of devotion to one's studies and to 'never be idle at anytime, day or night', I hope that from this point on I will be able to implement these moral codes into my own life, moving forward. I will forever be grateful to this program, Kogakkan University, and Ise City itself for teaching me these values.

Personally, I believe the only way to truly get to know a city is either by living there for a period or visiting it with someone who understands the city through and through. In this regard I believe this program was truly the best way for me to be introduced to this wonderful haven of tradition and culture. Not only did we get to live close to the centre of the city, to eat and live like students of Kogakkan University, but we were also guided through the city and its history by true experts in their respective fields whose passion for their subjects shone brightly in their classes and explanations. Now that I have learned a fraction of their knowledge on the city, I hope that I can be a good enough guide to introduce Ise to my own family one day.

「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラムはたった三週間で日本及び伊勢とその歴史・文化・宗教を学ぶことができる素晴らしいプログラムである。

現在に至る伊勢と神道についての授業とそれに繋がっているフィールド・スタディで、現代の観光地から、約 1000 年前に建てられた神社まで、伊勢の色々な部分を知ることができた。

個人的には、日本の伝統的・心理的な考え方はいつも私の憧れである。今まで日本文化を 5 年間勉強してきたが、このプログラムに参加したことによってはじめて、その本当の意味を少しは理解することができた気がする。

神道の受け入れ方・武士道の理想・「一期一会」・皇學館大学の理念によって、自分の研究および人生に影響を与えていただいたと感じている。

最後に、知らない町や外国を旅行する際には、その場所に住んでいる人、あるいは、その場所の出身であるガイドと一緒に旅行することが何より有益だと思っており、その点でもこのプログラムはすぐれており、参加させていただき光栄に思う。誠に有難うございました。 以上